



Outdoor Advertising Association of Connecticut, Inc.

**Written Testimony of
Stephen E. Hebert, President
Outdoor Advertising Association of Connecticut, Inc.
Friday, March 6, 2009
General Assembly's Transportation Committee**

HB 6393, An Act Concerning Transportation, Motor Vehicles, Highway Safety and Special Transportation Fund

Good afternoon Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrera, Senator Boucher, Rep. Scribner and the distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Stephen Hebert and I am the President of the Outdoor Advertising Association of Connecticut, Inc. (OAAC). I am also the Vice President/General Manager of Lamar Outdoor Advertising of Hartford. I appreciate you giving me this opportunity to testify about our concerns with House Bill 6393 "An Act Concerning Transportation, Motor Vehicles, Highway Safety and Special Transportation Fund."

First, section 5 of this legislation requires sign structures to be fully constructed and ready to display advertising within six months from the date that the Department of Transportation issues a permit. If the operator fails to complete the construction within the six months the permit shall be cancelled. OAAC understands the Department's concern with operators holding permit applications open for an indefinite period of time without building a structure. OAAC respectfully requests that this section of the legislation be amended with language that more closely mirrors municipal building codes. Our amendment, which is attached to my testimony, proposes that from the date of issuance of the permit the outdoor company must have the structure completed and ready for advertising within one year. The outdoor company may apply for a one time six month extension if they can demonstrate reasons beyond their control for the delay on construction. This proposed change allows for the inevitable delays associated with construction projects and addresses the Department's concerns regarding an open ended application.

In section 6, the legislation calls for application and permit fees to be increased by 500-percent. The Association understands and appreciates the difficult situation that the state finds itself in with the current budget crisis. The outdoor advertising industry is not immune to the current fiscal crisis. Our advertising revenues are down; we've made cutbacks and even have made the difficult decision to layoff our valued employees. To increase our permit fees by 500-percent during these difficult economic times would further exasperate the problem for the industry. Association members understand that during this fiscal crisis that permit and application fees should be under consideration for increases, our members simply ask that those increases be in line with other increases being considered by the General Assembly.



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In conclusion, billboards represent a cost effective way for local businesses (more than 80-percent of the advertisers are Connecticut businesses) to reach their customers. These businesses are the economic growth engines for the state, employing citizens who invest in our economy, paying state and local taxes. These businesses that advertising on our structures will play a critical role in the state's economic recovery. We simply ask that you continue to allow us the privilege of serving these businesses in a cost effective manner.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to testify, I'd be glad to answer any questions.

March 2, 2009

Amendment to HB 6393 offered by the Outdoor Advertising Association of CT:

AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPORTATION, MOTOR VEHICLES, HIGHWAY SAFETY AND SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION FUND.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Sec. 5. Section 21-50 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2009*):

No person, firm or corporation shall erect or maintain any outdoor advertising structure, device or display until a permit for the erection of such structure, device or display has been obtained from the Commissioner of Transportation. Application for such permit shall be in writing, signed by the applicant or his authorized agent, upon blanks furnished by the commissioner in such form and requiring such information as he prescribes. Each application shall have attached thereto the written consent of the owners of the property on which such structure, device or display is to be erected or maintained. A CONSTRUCTION OF A sign structure referenced in an approved sign permit application shall be COMMENCED fully constructed such that it is able to display advertising within six months **WITHIN ONE YEAR** from the date of the sign permit issuance **AND FULLY CONSTRUCTED SUCH THAT IT IS ABLE TO DISPLAY ADVERTISING WITHIN ONE YEAR FROM THE DATE OF START OF SIGN CONSTRUCTION. A PERMITTEE HOLDING AN UNEXPIRED PERMIT MAY APPLY FOR A ONE-TIME SIX MONTH EXTENSION PROVIDED THE PERMITTEE CAN SHOW GOOD AND SATISFACTORY REASONS BEYOND ITS CONTROL THAT THE WORK CANNOT BE COMMENCED WITHIN THE PERIOD FROM THE ORIGINAL PERMIT ISSUE DATE. NO ADDITIONAL FEE IS REQUIRED FOR THIS ONE-TIME EXTENSION. A PERMIT, WHICH HAS EXPIRED FOR SIX MONTHS OR LESS, MAY BE RENEWED PROVIDED NO CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE ORIGINAL PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR SUCH WORK. NO ADDITIONAL FEE IS REQUIRED FOR THIS RENEWAL.** Failure to complete the construction of the proposed sign structure within the TIME PERIODS SPECIFIED six-month-period shall cause the automatic cancellation of the sign permit for the proposed sign at the proposed location. Each application shall be accompanied by a fee as provided in subsection (a) of section 21-52, as amended by this act. The fee for such permit shall be as provided in subsection (b) of said section and shall be payable upon the granting of such permit and annually thereafter on the first day of August.